



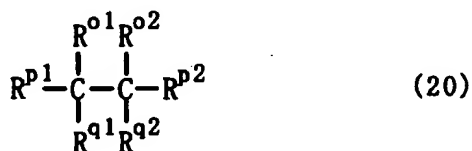
wherein each of R^{o1} , R^{p1} and R^{q1} is, identical to or different from one another, an organic group, where R^{o1} , R^{p1} and R^{q1} may be combined to form a ring with the adjacent carbon atom,

is allowed to react with (B22) a compound having a methine carbon atom and being shown by the following formula (14b):



wherein each of R^{o2} , R^{p2} and R^{q2} is, identical to or different from one another, an organic group, where R^{o2} , R^{p2} and R^{q2} may be combined to form a ring with the adjacent carbon atom,

in the presence of molecular oxygen by catalysis of the imide compound of the formula (1), to yield a coupling product shown by the following formula (20):



wherein R^{o1} , R^{p1} , R^{q1} , R^{o2} , R^{p2} and R^{q2} have the same meanings as defined above.

21. (original) A process according to one of claims 1 ^{or} ~~to~~ 3 and ~~14 to 20~~, wherein a metallic compound is used as a co-catalyst. 7a
10/4/06

22. (cancelled).

23. (previously presented) A process according to claim 3 for preparing α -hydroxy- γ , γ -dimethyl- γ -butyrolactone, in which: